

# Overwintering Strategies for Honeybees in Montana



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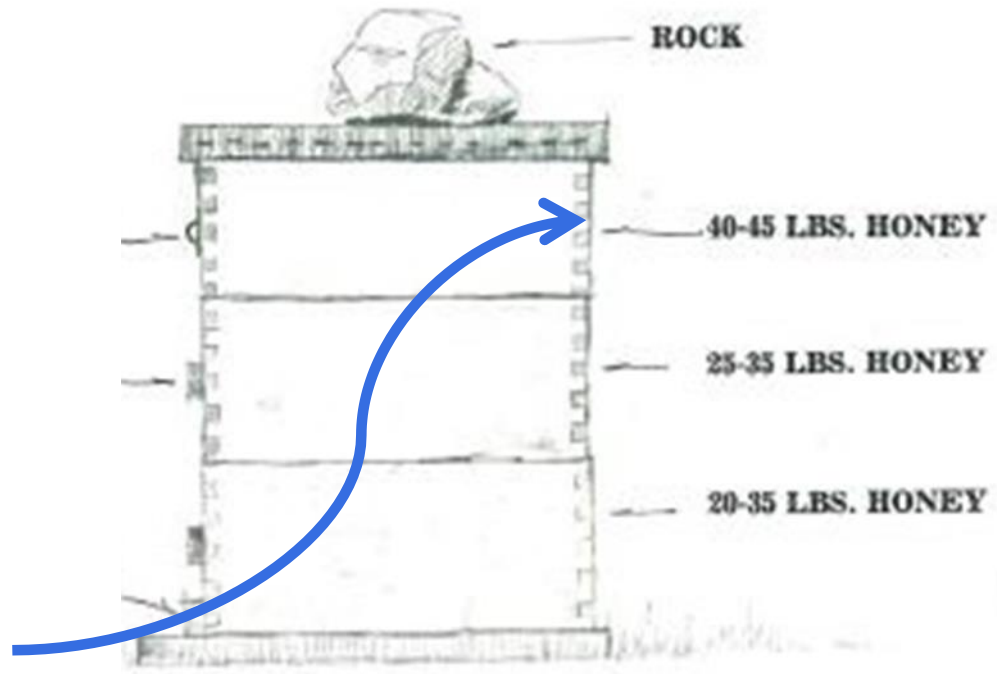
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# Basic Principles to Overwintering

- Adequate food reserves
- Low mite numbers
- Prolific queen
- Two hive openings (bottom and upper)
- Protection from the wind
- Make sure snow or hive coverings won't cover the entrances
- After that.....many opinions.....



# Importance of air movement in the hive



# **To feed or not to feed**

- **Leave 60 – 100 lbs of honey for the bees, or**
- **Extract all the honey and feed sugar water to get to the reserves, or**
- **Leave some honey ~50 lbs and feed sugar water to get to the desired level**
- **Most beekeepers agree that bees will do better on their honey reserves, which makes sense**
- **Much depends on if you are selling the honey. If this is a business, or is the honey for your own consumption, and this is a hobby**



# **University of Minnesota Recommendations - summary**

- **Adequate food reserves of 75 – 100 lbs, if not feed sugar water.**
- **Treat for mites in late August or early September if the colony has over 8-10 mites per 100 bees.**
- **Overwinter in three deep hive bodies.**
- **Have a bottom entrance and a top entrance, all other entrances are closed.**



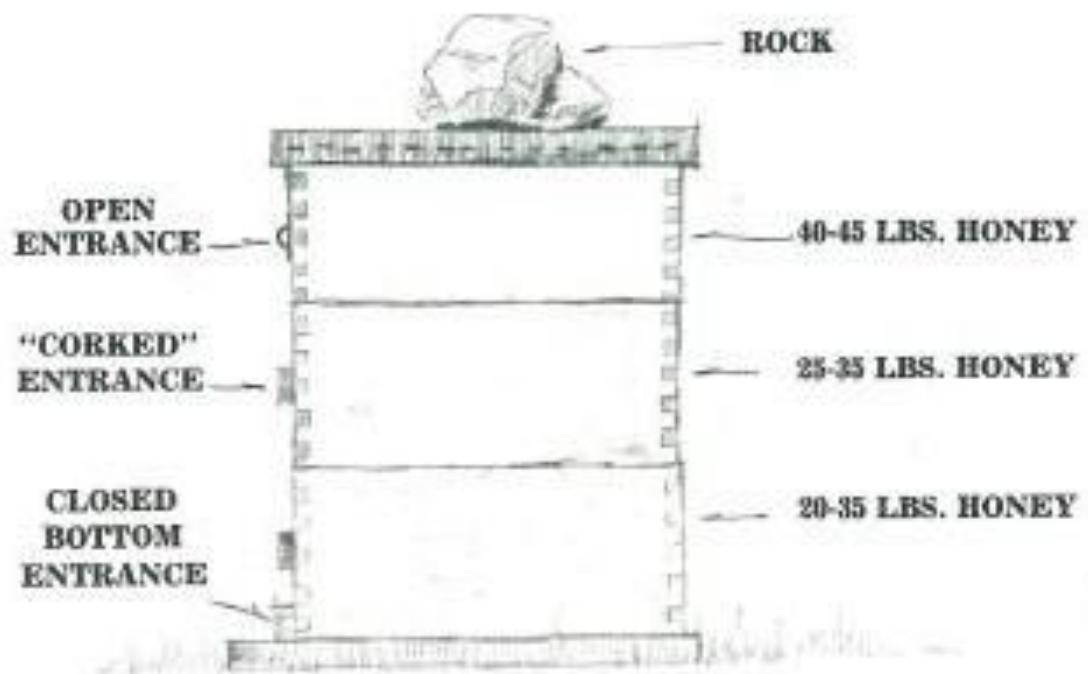
# **University of Minnesota Extension Recommendations - summary**

- **Use a moisture board over the inner cover**
- **Use a commercial winter carton over the hive or wrap in tarpaper**
- **Maintain on a hive stand to have dead air space under the hive**
- **Main goal in this system is building up to 3 deeps going into the winter and splitting the overwintered hive in the spring**



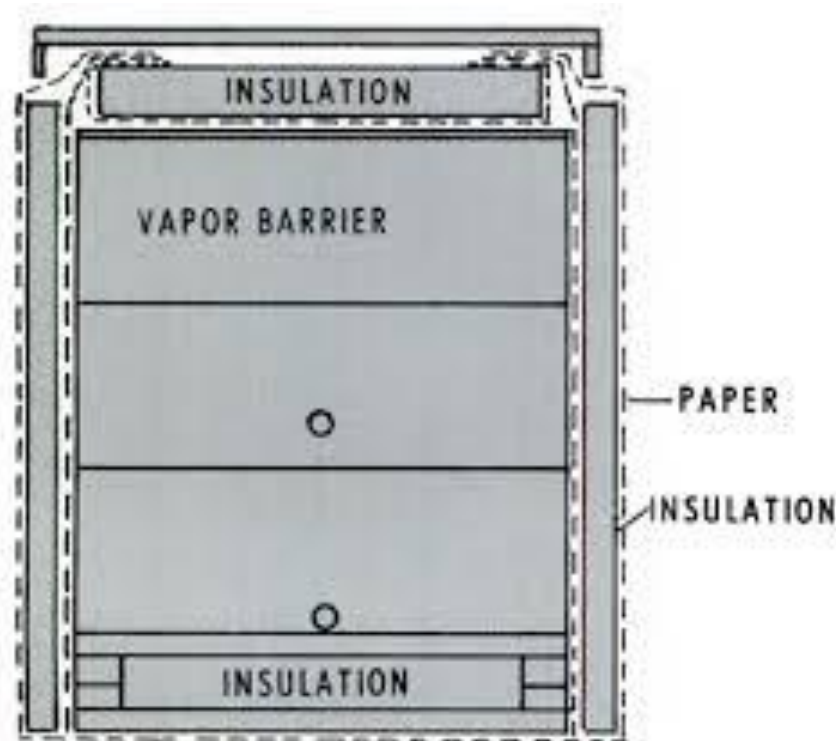
## Other options:

- Over winter with two hive bodies and a supper, or overwinter with two hive bodies



# Overwintering Considerations

- **Packing or no packing**
  - Most recommend no packing around the hive; it traps in moisture – ice box effect





# Moisture collection in the top?



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# Insulating the hive?



Notice the wire in the front to keep the mice out – a must if using bales



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# Tarpaper wrap?



Signs of too much moisture in the hive during the winter





# What is best?

- Experiment, but keep the basic principles in place
- It doesn't matter what strategy you use if your mite loads are too heavy going into the winter your bees will not survive, so get good control in August or September prior to winter.



**Questions?**

**Comments?**